



Overview

Points To Remember About Arthritis

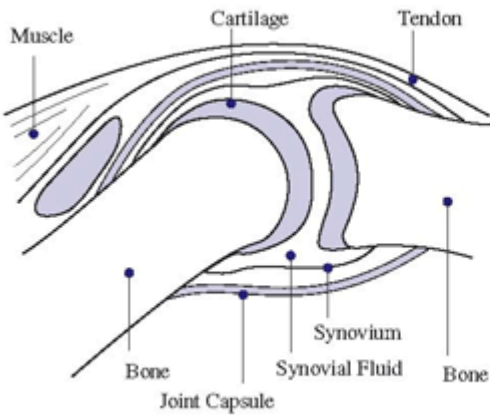
- "Arthritis" means joint inflammation. Although joint inflammation is a symptom or sign rather than a specific diagnosis, the term arthritis is often used to refer to any disorder that affects the joints.
- There are many types of arthritis, including ankylosing spondylitis, gout, juvenile arthritis, osteoarthritis, psoriatic arthritis, reactive arthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis.
- Medications and surgery can treat arthritis.
- Activities that can help reduce symptoms at home include exercise; hot and cold therapies; relaxation therapies; splints and braces; and assistive devices.

"Arthritis" literally means joint inflammation. Although joint inflammation is a symptom or sign rather than a specific diagnosis, the term arthritis is often used to refer to any disorder that affects the joints. Joints are places where two bones meet, such as your elbow or knee.

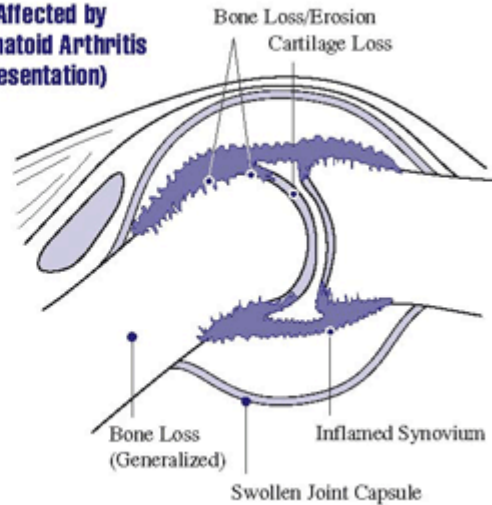
There are different types of arthritis. In some diseases in which arthritis occurs, other organs, such as your eyes, heart, or skin, can also be affected.

Fortunately, current treatments allow most people with arthritis to lead active and productive lives.

Normal Joint (Representation)



Joint Affected by Rheumatoid Arthritis (Representation)



Types

There are several types of arthritis. Common ones include:

- **Ankylosing Spondylitis** is arthritis that affects the spine. It often involves redness, heat, swelling, and pain in the spine or in the joint where the bottom of the spine joins the pelvic bone.
- **Gout** is caused by crystals that build up in the joints. It usually affects the big toe, but many other joints may be affected.
- **Juvenile Arthritis** is the term used to describe arthritis in children. Arthritis is caused by inflammation of the joints.
- **Osteoarthritis** usually comes with age and most often affects the fingers, knees, and hips. Sometimes osteoarthritis follows a joint injury. For example, you might have badly injured your knee when young and develop arthritis in your knee joint years later.
- **Psoriatic Arthritis** can occur in people who have psoriasis (scaly red and white skin patches). It affects the skin, joints, and areas where tissues attach to bone.
- **Reactive Arthritis** is pain or swelling in a joint that is caused by an infection in your body. You may also have red, swollen eyes and a swollen urinary tract.
- **Rheumatoid arthritis** happens when the body's own defense system doesn't work properly. It affects joints and bones (often of the hands and feet), and may also affect internal organs and systems. You may feel sick or tired, and you may have a fever.

Arthritis is seen with other conditions. These include:

- **Lupus** happens when the body's defense system harms the joints, heart, skin, kidneys, and other organs.
- **Infection** that gets into a joint and destroys the cushion between the bones.

Symptoms

Symptoms of arthritis can include:

- Pain, redness, heat, and swelling in your joints.
- Trouble moving around.
- Fever.
- Weight loss.
- Breathing problems.
- Rash or itch.

These symptoms may also be signs of other illnesses.

Causes

Some genes have been identified in certain types of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile arthritis. People with osteoarthritis may have inherited cartilage weakness.

If you have the gene, something in your environment may trigger the condition. For example, repeated joint injury may lead to osteoarthritis.

Diagnosis

To diagnose you with arthritis, your doctor may:

- Ask you about your medical history.
- Give you a physical exam.
- Take samples of blood for a laboratory test.
- Take x-rays.

Treatment

Your doctor will talk to you about the best way to treat your arthritis, based upon the type you have. Possible treatments include:

- Medications such as:
 - Pain relievers that are taken by mouth.
 - Creams or ointments that are rubbed into the skin over sore muscles or joints to relieve pain.
 - Medications that may slow the course of the disease and prevent further damage to joints or other parts of the body.
- Surgery, such as joint replacement.

Who Treats

Doctors who diagnose and treat arthritis and other rheumatic diseases include:

- A general practitioner, such as your family doctor.
- A rheumatologist, who specializes in arthritis and other diseases of the bones, joints, and muscles.

Living With

Some people may worry that arthritis means they won't be able to work or take care of their children and their family. Others think that you just have to accept things like arthritis. It's true that arthritis can be painful. But there are things you can do to feel better:

- Take your medications when and how you're supposed to.
- Exercise to reduce joint pain and stiffness. It also helps with losing weight, which reduces stress on the joints. You should speak to your doctor about a safe, well-rounded exercise program.
- Use heat and cold therapies to reduce joint pain and swelling.
- Try relaxation therapy to help reduce pain by learning ways to relax your muscles.
- Use splints and braces to support weakened joints or allow them to rest. You should see your doctor to make sure your splint or brace fits well.
- Use assistive devices, such as a cane or shoe insert, to ease pain when walking. Other devices can help you open a jar, close zippers, or hold pencils.

Related Resources

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Toll free: 888-INFO-FDA ([888-463-6332](tel:888-463-6332))

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

Drugs@FDA at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf>. Drugs@FDA is a searchable catalog of FDA-approved drug products.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

Website: <https://www.aaos.org>

American College of Rheumatology

Website: <https://www.rheumatology.org>

Arthritis Foundation

Website: <https://www.arthritis.org>

American Physical Therapy Association

Website: <https://www.apta.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov.

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)

Join a Clinical Trial

[Find a Clinical Trial](#)

Related Information

[Cómo vivir con artritis: Información básica de salud para usted y su familia](#)

[Rheumatoid Arthritis: Handout on Health](#)

[Arthritis and Rheumatic Diseases](#)

[Osteoarthritis: Handout on Health](#)

[Questions and Answers about Reactive Arthritis](#)

[What Is Reactive Arthritis? \(fast facts: easy-to-read\)](#)

[¿Qué es la artritis reactiva?](#)

[Psoriatic Arthritis Overview](#)

[Questions and Answers about Juvenile Arthritis](#)

[What Is Juvenile Arthritis? \(fast facts, easy-to-read\)](#)

[Esenciales: ¿Qué es la artritis juvenil?](#)

[Questions and Answers about Ankylosing Spondylitis](#)

[What Is Ankylosing Spondylitis \(fast facts, easy-to-read\)](#)

[¿Qué es la espondilitis anquilosante?](#)

[Osteoporosis and Arthritis: Two Common but Different Conditions](#)

[Osteoporosis and Arthritis and How are They different \(Sp\)
Healthy Joints Matter](#)

View/Download/Order Publications

[Arthritis, Living With: Health Information Basics for You and Your Family](#)
[Osteoporosis and Arthritis: How Are They Different? Easy-to-Read Fast Facts](#)